



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Kensington Prep School

March 2023

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School's Details

School	Kensington Prep School			
DfE number	205/6392			
Registered charity number	306983			
Address	Kensington Prep School 596 Fulham Road London SW6 5PA			
Telephone number	020 7731 9300			
Email address	enquiries@kenprep.gdst.net			
Headteacher	Mrs Caroline Hulme-McKibbin			
Chair of Governors	Mrs Sarah Margolin			
Proprietor	Girls' Day School Trust			
Age range	4 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	293			
	EYFS	45	Juniors	248
Inspection dates	21 to 23 March 2023			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Kensington Prep School is an independent day school for female pupils. The school is a member of the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST) which is responsible for its governance. There is also a non-executive school governing board to provide advice and links with the local community.
- 1.2 Founded in 1873, the school moved to its current location in 1997. The current headteacher has been in post since September 2018. Since the previous inspection, the school has created a new library facility.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aspires to foster pupils' creative, curious, healthy and happy minds within a supportive and nurturing environment which encourages pupils to investigate their world. Its aim is to equip pupils with the suitable knowledge, skills and self-confidence for their next phase of education and for lifelong learning.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of professional families with diverse cultural backgrounds, mostly living within a short journey of the school. Standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average compared with those taking similar tests nationally. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school has identified ten pupils as requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia, attention deficit disorder and speed of processing, of whom eight receive additional specialist help. English is an additional language (EAL) for 119 pupils, of whom eight require additional support for their English. The school modifies the curriculum for more able pupils and those with particular gifts or talents.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014, Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are

appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils.

2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils achieve outstanding success across the academic and wider curriculum.
- Pupils are excellent communicators.
- Pupils' study skills are extremely well developed.
- Pupils exhibit extremely positive attitudes towards their learning.
- Pupils demonstrate excellent skills, knowledge and understanding across the curriculum.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils have high levels of self-understanding and self-confidence.
- Pupils display excellent social awareness and are highly effective collaborators.
- Pupils show a mature level of moral understanding and readily take responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Pupils appreciate diversity and show outstanding respect for other cultures.

Recommendation

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

- Enable pupils to perform as strongly in timetabled outdoor learning as they do in other areas of the curriculum currently.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

3.5 Pupils in all phases of the school including the more able, those with SEND and those with EAL make excellent progress. Children in the EYFS build rapidly on their experiences and show excellent progress in developing their independent thinking and fine motor skills, for example, when cutting out and making masks, and using pencils to draw and write. Assessment data indicate that nearly all children in Reception meet the level of development expected at the end of the EYFS. Pupils leaving the school for the next phase of their education are successful in gaining entry to highly competitive independent schools, many receiving scholarship and exhibition awards. Teachers' secure knowledge of pupils' abilities and learning characteristics, enable them to provide appropriate support strategies and suitable challenge, so that pupils' progress and attainment are consistently promoted. Almost all

pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that their teachers know how to help them learn, know their subjects well and are supportive. Inspection evidence supports this view.

- 3.6 Pupils achieve outstanding success overall across the academic and wider curriculum. As well as academic scholarships to their destination schools, leavers have gained scholarship awards in music, sport, art and drama. Achievement is strong in a broad range of activities both within and beyond school. The school's netball teams are frequently successful in local and national tournaments and the cross country, gymnastics and football teams have flourished competitively. Pupils' talents have been recognised in county representation at swimming, netball, cricket and chess along with national success in rhythmic gymnastics. Individual pupils have achieved success in National Art Council awards and have participated in performances with the English National Ballet. Pupils' achievements in music are excellent. They benefit from a wealth of opportunities to sing or play an instrument and regularly participate in many ensembles and performances, as seen in the school's carol service and the chamber ensemble's rehearsal of *Coldplay's Clocks*. Pupils gain success in their Trinity examinations, many achieving at high grades for their age, and participate in the GDST Sing Junior concert. Several pupils have played in the National Children's Orchestra. Most parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that the school provides a suitable range of extra-curricular activities.
- 3.7 Pupils are outstanding communicators. They are highly effective listeners, for example, when participating in discussion groups to provide feedback to visitors. Inspectors found pupils to be extremely articulate, engaging, thoughtful and intelligent in their conversations. Pupils' reading skills are very well developed; the attractive and well-resourced library and visits from authors help promote their proclaimed love of reading. Pupils ask questions confidently and perceptively. For example, pupils in a Year 6 English lesson critiqued each other's work effectively and demonstrated advanced maturity in their extended project writing. Year 4 pupils' expressive writing on resolution of dilemmas communicated feelings and empathy with great clarity. Older pupils also conveyed images and emotions assuredly in poetry inspired by the eminent Guyanese poet Grace Nichols.
- 3.8 Pupils extremely well-developed study skills represent the successful fulfilment of the school's key aspirations. From their beginnings in Reception, children are encouraged to be curious, creative investigators. In their independent learning time, children in the EYFS showed excellent investigative skills in experimenting with lengths of guttering, support stands and trays to move water from place to place. They earnestly concocted personal potions using petals, lavender seeds and other resources. Pupils are highly adept at effective research, analysing information, thinking creatively and formulating hypotheses because their teachers develop and implement innovative, imaginative and stimulating schemes of work and lesson plans. Pupils in a Year 4 science investigation were encouraged to produce excellent hypotheses on whether sound could be heard in a vacuum. Year 5 pupils working in the high-tech learning classroom, the Explore Floor, displayed outstanding skills whilst investigating the effect of the re-introduction of wolves to Yellowstone National Park. They gathered evidence from a sophisticated range of sources which they studiously analysed, synthesised and questioned to formulate theories. Pupils are well supported to meet such challenges successfully by staff who encourage them to think critically and make links between prior and new knowledge.
- 3.9 Pupils show extremely positive attitudes towards their learning and are adept at taking initiative during lessons. They work ably both independently and collaboratively and have a real thirst for knowledge and learning. Pupils consistently display high levels of concentration and determination, as seen in a Year 2 art lesson where pupils showed great pride in their accomplishments. Pupils engage enthusiastically in lessons. Year 5 pupils greeted their introduction to Yellowstone National Park with wild excitement and eagerly joined the role-play. Pupils are well motivated by teachers who skilfully capture pupils' interest and focus, fortified by detailed preparation, and model collaboration to great effect. Pupils worked together well in all lessons observed. For example, pupils in Year 3 generously supported one another as they worked in small groups to improve their footballing skills. Pupils show initiative and lead their own learning in and out of class as illustrated by the digital leaders organising a photography competition.

- 3.10 Pupils display excellent skills, knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. Linguistic skills are well developed from an early age. Pupils in a Year 2 English lesson demonstrated advanced ability in their use of conjunctions, punctuation and expressive description in their writing on endangered species. Older pupils showed an excellent grasp of how to apply their knowledge and skills to deepen their understanding of a subject. Year 6 pupils produced excellent written interpretations when exploring Aristotle's quote, 'The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet'. Pupils across all phases use scientific and technical vocabulary most effectively. Children in the EYFS identified the attributes of ducklings that helped them to swim and pupils in a Year 3 science lesson referenced opacity when discussing light. In their science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) activities, pupils showed immense creativity as seen in Year 3 pupils' chocolate artwork and Year 4 pupils' designs and advertisements for items of wearable technology. Pupils' learning is enhanced by a broad programme of visits from speakers on topics ranging from glassmaking and sustainability to immigration.
- 3.11 Pupils develop a strong aesthetic appreciation of music and the arts from their lessons, clubs and visits to places such as the Globe Theatre, Southwark Cathedral and the British Library. Year 5 pupils exhibited excellent dramatic skills and stagecraft in their dress rehearsal of *Romeo and Juliet*. As they move through the school, pupils develop their physical skills well, as seen with Year 3 pupils developing their goalkeeping skills effectively in a physical education (PE) lesson. Staff ensure that the school is successful in meeting its aim to equip pupils with suitable knowledge and skills by planning an extensive range of inspiring activities supported with high-quality resources. Reception pupils have regular excursions to forest school in spring. Pupils' investigative skills are further developed in timetabled outdoor learning.
- 3.12 Pupils develop excellent skills in mathematics. Children in the EYFS develop their numeracy skills effectively through using a variety of resources. They explained the difference between two- and three-dimensional forms competently when making shapes out of matchsticks and clay. Pupils in Year 1 displayed high levels of accuracy and a clear understanding of basic fractions. Work from Year 4 pupils showed they could accurately calculate the perimeter of composite rectilinear shapes when given only some of the measurements. Pupils develop confidence in their problem-solving skills because their teachers encourage them to learn through trial and error. Consequently, pupils gain different strategies which they apply successfully to other areas of study. For example, Year 3 pupils used co-ordinates in geography and predicted and calculated liquid viscosity in science.
- 3.13 Pupils acquire extremely good digital learning skills as they progress through the school. They display an extensive range of these skills as they problem-solve, reflect and make progress through challenging tasks in computing and coding activities. For example, Year 4 pupils write algorithms for drawing letters and program a screen turtle successfully. They use applications effectively to edit and filter images, produce animations and create podcasts. Older pupils build successfully on their previous learning to produce blogs and videos. Pupils frequently source information from the internet effectively, becoming increasingly able to judge the efficacy of sources. They benefit from information and communication technology (ICT) being well embedded in the curriculum and from the excellent resources provided by the school's leaders.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.14 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.15 Pupils throughout the school show notably high levels of self-understanding and self-confidence for their age. They select appropriate levels of challenge in their work and are mindful of their own development. For example, pupils in a Year 4 PE lesson confidently and independently realised the steps to take to improve their dance sequences. Pupils reveal considerable self-understanding when discussing emotions, such as in a Year 2 personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lesson when they explained what makes them joyful or upset when using their digital devices. Year 6 pupils

in a workshop on managing relationships showed a mature understanding of how body language and expression affects perception; they reflected astutely on how they might deal effectively with potential feelings of inadequacy. Pupils display high levels of perseverance and resilience because teachers actively encourage them to challenge themselves, to take risks and develop independence. Consequently, the school very successfully meets its aim for pupils to be well prepared for the next stage of their education.

- 3.16 Pupils demonstrate excellent social awareness and collective responsibility. Their support of one another in collaborative efforts is a great strength and characteristic of the school as teachers ensure that it underpins all lessons. Pupils' high level of teamwork is reflected in their achievements in class and in their extra-curricular activities across all ages. Children in the EYFS showed exemplary responsibility and teamwork in tidying away the block maze at the end of their playtime. Pupils are highly effective in working together to achieve common goals as seen in their STEM challenges. Year 2 pupils combined to make bridges from pasta and playdough and Year 3 pupils worked in unison to engineer successfully tall towers from available resources. Most parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that the school equips their children with the collaborative and research skills they need in later life. Pupils work together successfully in sports teams and in musical productions such as *Hoodwinked*, performed by Year 4 pupils. They also display mature social awareness and teamwork in activities such as newspaper club and film club. The pupils have achieved the accolade of being nominated for an award at an international film festival with their film for the Marine Conservation Society on the issue of non-biodegradable wet wipes.
- 3.17 Pupils display well-developed moral understanding. In debating issues such as *the English Civil War*, older pupils considered the rights and wrongs of breaking from the rule of law. Pupils readily accept responsibility for their actions and any instances of misbehaviour and unkindness are met with challenge by their peers and staff. They consider the effect of their behaviour on others with demonstrable empathy and show an understanding of how to manage their own behaviour and resolve conflicts intelligently. They are keen to encourage and praise others. For example, following a presentation to the class by pupils in a mathematics lesson, others showed their appreciation with a spontaneous round of applause. By consistently acting with courtesy and consideration, and behaving responsibly, the pupils positively uphold the school's values.
- 3.18 Pupils are extremely inclusive and respectful of other faiths and cultures because teachers encourage them to look beyond their own culture and be open to new ideas. Pupils are comfortable and secure in their multi-cultural environment because the school's values of kindness and respect are well embedded. Almost all parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people. Pupils learn well from each other as they share personal experience and knowledge of their cultural traditions through stories, clothing and food. Work from Year 2 pupils during *Black History Month* showed a developing understanding of what life might be like for immigrants to the United Kingdom. Pupils' sensitive understanding and appreciation of equality, diversity and inclusion are effectively promoted through the PSHE curriculum. This is further enhanced by older pupils who meet weekly to acquire and share information with pupils throughout school on festivals and events such as Vaisakhi, world hearing day and Burns night.
- 3.19 Pupils contribute positively to the school community. Older pupils support younger pupils informally and help them to select library books. Groups such as change-makers and digital leaders provide a valuable conduit of information and support to other pupils. Those on the school council have promoted the re-naming of the school's houses which older pupils lead efficiently in a variety of competitive activities. Pupils show a strong appreciation of the need to help those less fortunate than themselves. They regularly raise money for local, national and international charities. Sometimes this work is initiated by pupils themselves such as 'Foodbank Friday' and book donations. Year 4 pupils support a local care home where they have sung and made Christmas cards with the residents. Pupils

have established relationships with their peers from a local state-maintained school through shared assemblies and football matches advocated by the respective school's leaders.

- 3.20 Pupils show a strong appreciation of the non-material aspects of life. They expressed a deep respect for the environment and a determination to preserve it. Children in Reception demonstrated their spiritual awareness with squeals of excitement and delight as the recently hatched ducklings took their first swim. Older pupils expressed the exhilaration they experienced performing in the GDST Junior Sing concert, and articulated the spine-tingling sensation induced by the performance of a talented pianist in assembly. Pupils in a Year 3 art lesson using their bare hands to squeeze gluey strips of paper into tight balls to form their garden bird shapes described the experience as so satisfying. Pupils in a Year 6 mindfulness lesson exhibited a deep appreciation of nature as they examined and described the beauty of daffodils. Pupils also benefit from discrete philosophy lessons in which they explore abstract concepts and create their own philosophical questions.
- 3.21 Pupils are confident and adept decision-makers. They make well-informed choices to benefit their learning and progress. This is successfully promoted by teaching that consistently encourages pupils to discuss their thinking with a partner classmate before embarking upon action. Pupils readily share their ideas, for example, in gymnastics where they discussed their programme of movement to decide the optimum display for the audience. Pupils make good decisions to benefit their welfare and improvements to their environment through the school council, eco-warrior and digital leader initiatives. For example, the latter decide upon a word of the week, such as microchip, for other pupils to research and learn about. As a group they decided to hold a spring photography competition open to all pupils in the school. Pupils of all ages develop confidence in their decision-making because teachers provide support and guidance whilst allowing them much freedom and latitude to make their own choices.
- 3.22 Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe, including online, and what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. At lunch, they spoke eloquently about eating a balanced diet and made sensible choices when selecting from the healthy options available. Children in the EYFS related their enjoyment of the outdoor environment, breathing the fresh air, stretching, eating good foods and drinking water regularly. Pupils embrace physical activity through their regular PE and sports activities. They appreciate the important contributions that exercise and positive mental health make towards their wellness. In discussions, pupils acknowledged the benefit of their weekly mindfulness lessons in helping them to thrive and praised the school's support for their wellbeing.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended assembly. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Vaughan Jelley	Reporting inspector
Mr Nigel Helliwell	Compliance team inspector (Former head, IAPS school)
Miss Heather Fulton	Team inspector (Former head of nursery and pre-prep, IAPS school)